



**“PRAYING IS NOT A LESSON GOT BY FORMS AND RULES OF ART, BUT FLOWING FROM PRINCIPLES OF NEW LIFE.” – WILLIAM GURNALL<sup>1</sup>**

*What are your top 2 questions or struggles about prayer?*

- Committing time each day to pray fervently – especially for our persecuted brothers and sisters.
- Sometimes I don’t know exactly what to pray for.
- If I know God hears me the first time I pray why should I keep praying the same prayer?
- When others pray, words seem to flow out of their mouth. They don’t flow from my mouth.
- My mind drifting when I pray. I don’t know how to stop it.
- When prayer starts, prayer triggers a thought which triggers another thought which triggers another thought which triggers another thought and before I know it I’m no longer praying but thinking and planning and trying to resolve problems and conflicts (maybe I’m ADD) LOL. Solution: meds???
- I fall asleep while I am praying.
- What are some solutions to having a regular/consistent prayer life?
- How do you know if you are deserving of what you are praying for?
- Do I have to pray a “Lord’s Prayer” –esque prayer as Jesus indicates or are more conversational/casual prayers allowed?
- Is it okay to pray for success in the area of business if that means material success? Is it wrong to want to be financially successful?
- Where can I pray without people looking at me weird?

*Common statements about prayer*

- ⇒ “Prayer changes things.”
- ⇒ “All we can do is pray.”
- ⇒ “Why bother praying if God is sovereign?”
- ⇒ “My prayers won’t make it past the ceiling.”
- ⇒ “Prayer doesn’t work.”

**Ephesians 6:10-20**

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

## Reasons why we don't pray

- Fear: We don't want to make a mistake.
- Doubt: Not sure if God cares or hears.

Galatians 6:9

*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

- Unbelief: We don't believe in a God to pray to.
- Pride: We don't think we need prayer.

*"Neglect of private prayer is the locust which devours the strength of the church."*

– Charles Spurgeon<sup>2</sup>

## Building blocks of a solid prayer relationship with God

- Prayer is a **privilege** for God's children.<sup>3</sup>

Hebrews 4:16

*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

- Prayer is a **conduit** for experiencing the power of God.

Q: What about unbelievers?

A: "The prayers of sinners, though they have no goodness in them, yet are made a means of a preparation for mercy." – Jonathan Edwards<sup>4</sup>

## The beauty of prayer

a. Christ has removed the "Prayer Barrier."

b. Prayer reminds us that life is not about us.

*"[Prayer] gives us relief from the melancholy burden of self-absorption."* – Tim Keller<sup>5</sup>

c. Prayer reminds us of the incalculable **cost** of a relationship with God.

*"We know God will answer us when we call because one terrible day he did *not* answer Jesus when *he* called."* – Tim Keller<sup>6</sup>

d. Prayer reminds us that we are not **God**.

## Next Steps in prayer

- If someone asks you for prayer, pray for them right then and there.
- Use prayer prompts: Pray for people you're reminded of by random events.
- Write out your prayers. You can look back and see answered prayers.
- Create a prayer schedule.
- Ask your waiter or waitress if you can pray for them.
- Find a prayer partner: Pray with your spouse.
- Pray before your meal. If you have children, read a few Bible verses.
- Set a reminder to pray on your Smart Phone or calendar.
- Use The Lord's Prayer as a template for your prayers (Matthew 6:9-13).
- Pray the Scriptures.

“Until the gate of hell is shut upon a man we must not cease to pray for him. And if we see him hugging the very doorposts of damnation, we must go to the mercy seat and beseech the arm of grace to pluck him from his dangerous position. While there is life there is hope, and although the soul is almost smothered with despair, we must not despair for it, but rather arouse ourselves to awaken the Almighty arm.” – Charles Spurgeon

### Appendix

- “Prayer is the soul’s breathing itself into the bosom of its heavenly Father.” – Thomas Watson<sup>7</sup>
- “Edwards usually rose at four or five in the morning in order to spend thirteen hours in his study.... He began the day with private prayers followed by family prayers, by candlelight in winter. Each meal was accompanied by household devotions, and at the end of each day Sarah joined him in his study for prayers. Jonathan kept secret the rest of his daily devotional routine, following Jesus’ command to pray in secret. Throughout the day, his goal was to remain constantly with a sense of living in the presence of God, as difficult as that might be. Often he added secret days of fasting and additional prayers.” – George Marsden<sup>8</sup>
- “Prayer, then, for Edwards was both planned and informal, scheduled and spontaneous, on a daily basis.” – Donald Whitney<sup>9</sup>
- “I had great longings for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in the world; my secret prayers used to be, in great part, taken up in praying for it.” – Jonathan Edwards<sup>10</sup>
- “Hurry is the death of prayer” – Samuel Chadwick<sup>11</sup>
- “When Christian receives his armour in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* the weapon of ‘All-prayer’ is given as one which will stand him in good stead when everything else fails, and with this he prevails against the fiends which beset him in the Valley of the Shadow: when he poured out his soul in fervent prayer ‘they gave back, and came no farther’...the bond of fellowship which united the people of God is never more effective than when they are praying for one another.” – F. F. Bruce<sup>12</sup>
- Early Christian Prayer: “We ask you, Master, be our helper and defender. Rescue those of our number in distress; raise up the fallen; assist the needy; heal the sick; turn back those of your people who stray; feed the hungry; release our captives; revive the weak; encourage those who lose heart. Let all the nations realize that you are the only God, that Jesus Christ is your Child, and that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture.” – 1 Clement (c. 96)<sup>13</sup>

### Recommended reading

- Proverbs 15:29; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; James 5:16.
- Jonathan Edwards, *Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer*.<sup>14</sup>
- E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer*.
- *10 Questions on Prayer with Tim Keller*.<sup>15</sup>
- Millard Erickson, *God the Father, The Almighty*.
- Randolph Byrd, MD, “Positive Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer in a Coronary Care Unit Population at the San Francisco General Medical Center, CA, in 1988.”<sup>16</sup>
- Robin Yapp, “Does prayer help us resist temptation? Talking to God boosts self-control and emotional stability, claims study,” *Daily Mail*.<sup>17</sup>
- Roy B. Zuck, “When God is Silent.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour: A Treatise of the Saints' War Against the Devil* Volume 2 (London: Blackie and Son, 1865), 294. "[Prayer was] the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life."

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Hess, "20 Charles Spurgeon Quotes That Will Stir Your Zeal for Prayer," *Church Leaders*, August 24, 2015, <https://churchleaders.com/daily-buzz/177011-charles-haddon-spurgeon-on-leading-through-prayer.html/4>.

<sup>3</sup> "Hence we may learn how highly we are privileged, in that we have the Most High revealed to us, who is a God that heareth prayer. The greater part of mankind are destitute of this privilege. Whatever their necessities are, whatever their calamities or sorrows, they have no prayer-hearing God to whom they may go...How highly privileged are we, in that we have the holy word of this same God, to direct us how to seek for mercy! And whatever difficulties or distress we are in, we may go to him with confidence and great encouragement. What a comfort may this be to us! and what reason have we to rejoice in our privilege, to prize them so highly." Jonathan Edwards, *The Most High, A Prayer-Hearing God*, 59. [http://www.digitalpuritan.net/Digital%20Puritan%20Resources/Edwards,%20Jonathan/The%20Works%20of%20President%20Edwards%20\(vol.8\)%20Ind%20Works/\[JE\]%20The%20Most%20High%20a%20Prayer-Hearing%20God.pdf](http://www.digitalpuritan.net/Digital%20Puritan%20Resources/Edwards,%20Jonathan/The%20Works%20of%20President%20Edwards%20(vol.8)%20Ind%20Works/[JE]%20The%20Most%20High%20a%20Prayer-Hearing%20God.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Edwards: "God is pleased sometimes to answer the prayers of unbelievers. Indeed he hears not their prayers for their goodness or acceptableness, or because of any true respect to him manifested in them, for there is none; nor has he obliged himself to answer such prayers; yet he is pleased sometimes, of his sovereign mercy, to pity wicked men, and hear their cries. Thus he heard the cries of the Ninevites, (Jonah iii.) and the prayer of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27, 28. Though there be no regard to God in their prayers, yet he, of his infinite grace, is pleased to have respect to their desires of their own happiness, and to grant their requests. He may, and sometimes does, hear the cries of wicked men, as he hears the hungry ravens, when they cry, Psal. cxlvii. 9. And he opens his bountiful hand, and satisfies the desires of every living thing, Psal. cxlv. 16. Besides the prayers of sinners, though they have no goodness in them, yet are made a means of a preparation for mercy." *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin 2014), 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>7</sup> Isaac David Ellis Thomas, comp. ed., *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations* (Carlisle, PA.: Banner of Truth, 1977), 209.

<sup>8</sup> George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 133.

<sup>9</sup> Donald S. Whitney, "Pursuing a Passion for God Through Spiritual Disciplines: Learning from Jonathan Edwards," *Desiring God 2003 National Conference*, October 11, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Harold P. Simonson, ed., *Selected Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen F. Olford, *Manna in the Morning*, 8. Olford writes, "You can get more from the Lord in five minutes spent unhurriedly than in thirty-five minutes with your eye on the clock." 9.

<sup>12</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Verse-by-Verse Exposition* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1961), 133.

<sup>13</sup> "Prayers of the Earliest Christians," *Christianity Today*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-37/prayers-of-earliest-christians.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer*, [http://www.sowersseedreprints.com/uploads/Hypocrites\\_Deficient\\_in\\_the\\_Duty\\_of\\_Prayer\\_-\\_Jonathan\\_Edwards.pdf](http://www.sowersseedreprints.com/uploads/Hypocrites_Deficient_in_the_Duty_of_Prayer_-_Jonathan_Edwards.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Tony Reinke, "10 Questions on Prayer With Tim Keller," *Desiring God*, October 31, 2014, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/10-questions-on-prayer-with-tim-keller>.

<sup>16</sup> Randolph Byrd, MD, "Positive Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer in a Coronary Care Unit Population." *Southern Medical Journal*. 1988 July; 81(7): 826-29. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3393937>. Byrd's abstract reads: The therapeutic effects of intercessory prayer (IP) to the Judeo-Christian God, one of the oldest forms of therapy, has had little attention in the medical literature. To evaluate the effects of IP in a coronary care unit (CCU) population, a prospective randomized double-blind protocol was followed. Over ten months, 393 patients admitted to the CCU were randomized, after signing informed consent, to an intercessory prayer group (192 patients) or to a control group (201 patients). While hospitalized, the first group received IP by participating Christians praying outside the hospital; the control group did not. At entry, chi-square and stepwise logistic analysis revealed no statistical difference between the groups. After entry, all patients had follow-up for the remainder of the admission. The IP group subsequently had a significantly lower severity score based on the hospital course after entry (P less than .01). Multivariate analysis separated the groups on the basis of the outcome variables (P less than .0001). The control patients required ventilatory assistance, antibiotics, and diuretics more frequently than patients in the IP group. These data suggest that intercessory prayer to the Judeo-Christian God has a beneficial therapeutic effect in patients admitted to a CCU."

<sup>17</sup> Robin Yapp, "Does prayer help us resist temptation? Talking to God boosts self-control and emotional stability, claims study," *Daily Mail*, November 29, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2515637/Does-prayer-help-resist-temptation-Talking-God-boosts-self-control-emotional-stability-claims-study.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Dallas Theological Seminary*, February 16, 2012, <http://www.dts.edu/read/when-god-is-silent-zuck/>.